

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EEC, EGEN
SUBJ: EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL, NOVEMBER 21-22, 1977:
REGIONAL FUND

REF: (A) BRUSSELS 6074 (B) BRUSSELS 15371 (C) BRUSSELS 9066

1. THE NOVEMBER 21-22 EC FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL WAS UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE EC COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL FOR MODIFYING AND EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF THE COMMUNITY'S REGIONAL POLICY THROUGH AN INCREASE IN THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE EC'S REGIONAL FUND (REF A). DECISION WAS BLOCKED BY FRENCH INSISTENCE THAT THEIR 15 PERCENT QUOTA SHARE OF THE FUND WAS TOO LOW AND THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF COUNCIL AGREEMENT TO AN INCREASE OF THEIR QUOTA, THEY WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THE OVERALL SIZE OF THE FUND OR WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE A NON-QUOTA SECTION IN THE FUND, AS PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION. ACCORDING TO AN IRISH PERMREP OFFICIAL, IRELAND ALSO RESERVED ITS POSITION ON THE SIZE OF THE FUND, ON THE BASIS THAT, IF FRANCE WERE TO RECEIVE A QUOTA INCREASE, IRELAND SHOULD RECEIVE ONE AS WELL. BOTH ISSUES (FUND SIZE AND NON-QUOTA SECTION)
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HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO THE DECEMBER 5-6 EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR DECISION. THE FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL INSTRUCTED COREPER TO CONTINUE WORK ON THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSED PACKAGE SO THAT A COUNCIL DECISION CAN BE TAKEN BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR IF THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MANAGE TO RESOLVE THE DIFFERENCES PRESENTED TO THEM.

2. IN A RELATED MATTER, THE COUNCIL WAS FACED WITH DECIDING ON THE AMOUNT TO BE ENTERED IN THE 1978 EC BUDGET FOR THE REGIONAL FUND, BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 23 DEADLINE FOR ACTING ON THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S AMENDMENTS TO THE BUDGET (REF B), WHICH INCLUDED THE RESTORATION OF THE FULL COMMITMENT APPROPRIATION OF 750 MILLION EUROPEAN UNITS OF ACCOUNT (MEUA: ONE EUA EQUALS \$1.17) FOR THE REGIONAL FUND ORIGINALLY PROPOSED BY THE COMMISSION. THE JULY 20 BUDGET COUNCIL (REF C) HAD CUT THIS FIGURE BACK TO 398 MEUA. ALTHOUGH THE MINISTERS FORMALLY REJECTED THE PARLIAMENT'S BUDGETARY AMENDMENT RESTORING THE FULL AMOUNT RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMISSION, THEY DID EMPHASIZE IN A STATEMENT TO THE PARLIAMENT (WHOSE BUDGET COMMITTEE WAS MEETING NOVEMBER 22 WITH THE EC BUDGET COUNCIL - SEE SEPTTEL) THAT THE COUNCIL LOOKED FORWARD TO NEW DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PARLIAMENT ON DECEMBER 7 (AFTER THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING), WITH A VIEW TO REACHING "AN AGREEMENT WHICH REPRESENTS A SUBSTANTIAL REAL INCREASE IN THE ACTIVITY OF THE FUND."
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